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THE QUANDARY OF HENRY CABOT LODGE

General Eisenhower has urged him to campaign for the G.O.P. presidential nomination, but that would mean leaving his post in South Vietnam—and Lodge hates to run out on a fight.

By Stanley Karnow

When Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower recently urged Henry Cabot Lodge to become an active candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, he was, in a sense, returning a compliment. Twelve years ago Lodge, then the junior senator from Massachusetts, was the man mainly responsible for convincing Eisenhower that he had a duty to make himself available to the G.O.P. convention.

The two cases have other similarities. Twelve years ago Eisenhower was serving his country abroad as commander of SHAPE in Paris; today Lodge is our ambassador to South Vietnam. Political support for both candidates, furthermore, began to grow without any cooperation from either. Eisenhower, elected President in 1952, did not even agree to run until that spring. Lodge, who could be elected next fall, has yet to reach a decision.

Lodge supporters in the District of Columbia and New Hampshire have asked his permission to enter his name in their primaries. A fan in Lodge's native Massachusetts is collecting a million signatures urging his hero to run. And not long ago commuters on the New Haven Railroad were handed tracts describing the tall (six feet, three inches), handsome, 61-year-old Lodge as a man who is not only qualified for the Presidency but actually "*looks* like a President." More significantly, the professional politicians have started to eye Lodge judiciously. In a recent canvass of 1,361 Republican leaders in 50 states, the Associated Press reported that, though he still trailed Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon, Lodge's stature as a potential candidate was growing fast. And last month, in a Gallup poll which asked voters to rate each of the leading G.O.P. contenders against Johnson, Lodge came out ahead of both Rockefeller and Goldwater—and trailing Nixon by only one percentage point.

All these signs would normally hearten a veteran politician. They have, however, confronted Lodge with a curious dilemma. As an American ambassador he cannot pursue even the most subtle efforts to promote himself politically without violating State Department regulations as well as the Hatch Act, which forbids officers and employees of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government to take any active part in political campaigns. Moreover, to campaign for the Republican nomination, Lodge should probably return home and throw himself into the political arena. Yet to abandon his job in Vietnam now, he realizes, would be to walk off the battlefield of the only hot war the U.S. is fighting against Communism, a thing he instinctively recoils from doing.

As long as he stays in Saigon, Lodge is obviously determined to observe the ground rules of his job. Interviewed at the U.S. chancellery there recently, he cautiously and skillfully parried every attempt to draw him into any political talk whatever. Of his own immediate ambitions he would say only, "I will not get the Republican nomination, and I will not be elected President."

Lodge has ordered that his name not be entered in the New Hampshire primary next month—it has been anyway—and he wrote to the District of Columbia Republican chairman last December: "While I am naturally complimented that some people think I would make a good President, I have no intention of running and think that the most helpful thing I can do for the country at the present time is my work here in Vietnam."

Pundits experienced in the mysterious ways of political behavior are inclined to discount such statements. New York *Herald Tribune* columnist Roscoe Drummond, for example, is totally convinced that Lodge will sooner or later plunge into the political fray. "The unresolved question," he wrote recently, "is not whether Mr. Lodge is going to resign his ambassadorship and become an open, active and campaigning candidate for the nomination—but when."

Until he does, however, Lodge is in a quandary, one that must be particularly painful for him, because he is said to think that his chances for nomination actually are fairly good. According to friends who have heard him fiddle with Republican arithmetic, Lodge is pretty sure that none of the current front runners will emerge as the party's candidate. Nixon, for example, is shrugged off as a two-time loser whose final failure in the California gubernatorial contest finished his political career. Goldwater is too extremist and, the conjecture goes, Rockefeller cannot recover from the taint of his divorce and remarriage. Discounting such dark horses as Romney and Lodge as the man most likely to succeed.

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